STATE OF ARIZONA

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS CAN BE FILED BY PHONE

(PHOENIX - November 14, 2001) – Applications for unemployment insurance are being filed by telephone statewide under a new process recently implemented by the Department of Economic Security Employment Security Administration. Managed through two call centers, the Arizona Re-employment Rapid Access makes it more convenient and less expensive for individuals to access unemployment insurance services by taking claims over the phone. This front-end process uses an interactive voice response system, which then transfers callers to a live agent.

Recently the number of calls received at the call centers were more than 3200 a day as compared to 2300 daily inquires in July. Due to the increasing number of calls the centers have increased the number of staff available to provide assistance and the hours of operation have been increased from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Claimants that don't have ready access to a telephone can go to any DES Job Service Office and use a telephone there with direct lines to the call centers.

Callers are reminded that to become eligible to receive unemployment benefits a person must have lost a job involuntarily and must have earned a certain amount of money during the past year. For a person filing now, the Employment Security Administration will look at what was earned during the last half of 2000 and the first six months of 2001. They must have earned a minimum of $1500 over four quarters to qualify for the minimum benefit of $40 a week. Those that earned more than $5,112 during one quarter may receive the maximum benefit of $205 a week. Unemployment benefits are provided for up to six months in Arizona.

The number to call in the Phoenix metropolitan area is (602) 364-2722. Callers are reminded that there may be as much as a ten-minute wait time.

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